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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PRESIDENT PAYS LOW-KEY VISIT TO JAPAN

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4 (B & D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev paid a low-key visit to Tokyo November 14-16 during which he met with Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, the Emperor, and Minister of Administrative Reform Yoshimi Watanabe, whose father, former Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe, was the first senior level Japanese official to visit Kyrgystan following its independence in 1992. Japanese officials termed the visit "routine." In a joint statement following their meeting, Prime Minister Fukuda and President Bakiev agreed to enhance bilateral and regional relations. Japan pledged to continue to provide ODA and Bakiev promised to continue to promote democratization and market economics in Kyrgystan. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) President Bakiev, accompanied by Mrs. Bakiev, arrived in Japan November 14 as a "distinguished guest for a working visit", according to Keisuke Tamura, Deputy Director of MOFA's Central Asia and Caucasus Division. Tamura told Embassy Tokyo Political Officer the visit was part of a routine rotation that brings Central Asian leaders to Japan. The last Kyrgyz head of state visit to Japan took place in April 2004 when President Akaev came to Tokyo. Bakiev visited once before, as Prime Minister, in June 2001. A Japanese Prime Minister has yet to reciprocate. Bakiev was also accompanied by a delegation of approximately 15 which included the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Transportation.

13. (C) A summit meeting was held by the two leaders the evening of November 14, followed by a joint press conference during which the joint statement Fukuda and Bakiev had signed was released. During the meeting, according to Tamura, PM Fukuda expressed Japan's intention to continue to support Kyrgystan's efforts towards the promotion of democracy and a market economy, pledging to provide a seminar for parliamentarians on the role of local governments, and also indicating increased support for assistance with transportation infrastructure development and human resource development. (NOTE: There were no new pledges of assistance announced, but last October the two countries exchanged a note for grant aid of 4.76 million yen (approx. USD 4.25M) for the reconstruction of bridges in Chui Oblast, and in June, a 2.99 million yen grant (approx. USD 2.67M) was made for a Human Resource Development Scholarship project. END NOTE.) President Bakiev responded by pledging to continue to make progress on democratization and the opening of the economy with the hope of further Japanese direct investment, specifically in the field of rare metals. Bakiev also

thanked Japan for its "Central Asia plus Japan" initiative and agreed with Fukuda on the importance of regional cooperation.

14. (C) On the subject of terrorism, Tamura reported that Bakiev thanked Fukuda for Japan's contributions to the Operation Enduring Freedom maritime task force, and Fukuda reciprocated by noting the use by coalition forces of Kyrgystan's Manas airbase. Other topics touched upon included Japan's desire for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, which Bakiev said Kyrgystan would support, the need to address the North Korean proliferation and abduction issues, and cooperation to create an effective international framework to address climate change.

15. (C) Following the meeting, PM Fukuda and his wife hosted a dinner for the Bakievs. Kyrgyz Embassy First Secretary Rysbek Moldogaziev told Political Officer he had feared the dinner would be a bust because PM Fukuda had a minor cold, but instead dinner lasted longer than planned, rather than shorter, and that the President had been very pleased by the warm reception he and his delegation received.

16. (C) On November 15, President and Mrs. Bakiev paid a formal, pro-forma call on the Emperor and Empress. President Bakiev also received, at his hotel, a courtesy call from Minister of State for Financial Services, Central and Regional Administrative Reform and Civil Service Reform Yoshimi Watanabe, who is the Chairman of the Japan-Kyrgystan Parliamentary Friendship League and whose father, former Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe, had been the first senior Japanese official to visit Kyrgystan following its independence in 1992. According to Moldogaziev, a planned meeting with the Speaker of the Diet's House of Representatives had to canceled at the last minute due to a family emergency for the Speaker. The visit concluded on November 16, with President Bakiev attending a seminar on Kyrgyz trade and investment sponsored by the Kyrgyz Embassy.

17. (C) COMMENT: The visit was very low-key and received little press coverage. However, both sides seemed satisfied, despite the very modest and mostly symbolic outcome. Embassy will email to EAP, SCA and Embassy Bishkek our unofficial translation of the joint statement.

SCHIEFFER